

Jonckheere

Piccolo

Evaluation

The growing demand for quality small coaches has prompted Jonckheere concessionaires, Roeselare Sales, to market a midicoach with Jubilee-style bodywork, designated the Jonckheere P35 Piccolo.

The 8.2 metre coach is based on a Quest 80 chassis and is capable of carrying up to 35 passengers and their luggage in big coach comfort. It has a full-sized front entrance and can be fitted with interior dimensions which allow toilet, drinks vending machine and courier seat.

The Quest "J" type chassis was developed specially for Jonckheere, its rear engine configuration being thought a sensible base. It enables the provision of big coach passenger access and a relatively flat floor, whilst allowing for a large good luggage area between the axles. The Quest chassis uses Ford components and is covered by Ford



Above: The P35 Piccolo shares the good looks of the rest of the Jonckheere Jubilee range. Below right: The Piccolo offers reduced capacity and initial cost without sacrificing passenger comfort.

Below left: A rear mounted Ford 6 cylinder (cargo) engine powers the vehicle.

warranty both in the UK and throughout Europe, ensuring full after-sales service availability.

Externally the P35 Piccolo resembles a short P50, and uses many Jubilee parts. The coach tested however was the prototype and although looking similar to future production models has minor specification differences. The sides of the coach are flat with a slight taper inwards from saloon windows to roof. Three windows run the length of the passenger area on the nearside, the rearmost one on the offside split to accommodate the



emergency door. Between the axles two flaps either side lift to expose the central luggage area. On the prototype the chassis runs across the centre of the bay taking up some of the available height. On production examples the chassis centre section is to be raised thus increasing volume. It is expected that the modification will give the appearance of integral construction when looking into the bays. Even with the chassis in its present form the luggage compartment is substantial.

Behind the rear axle access flaps cover radiator air intake on the nearside and engine, on the offside. A full width engine bay door opens to protrude horizontally from the rear of the coach, above which is the shallow full-width rear screen. The front of the Piccolo features the full width grille and rectangular headlight arrangement used on P50 models.



Production variants will have the spare wheel mounted behind this grille, underneath the front floor. A one piece wrap around windscreens is fitted. The entrance door is swivel mounted and power operated with a pavement window; a peage window was also fitted to the prototype. Standard on all Piccolos will be tinted windows, laminated screen, heated exterior mirrors, marker lights, and wheel trims. The prototype is double glazed, an option on production bodies. Overall the design is attractive and well-proportioned.

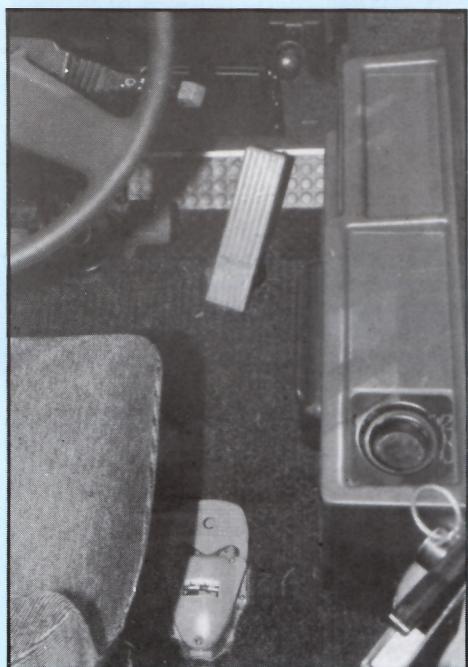
Passenger access is very easy on the Piccolo, with shallow entrance steps and a spacious entrance area by midcoach standards. Roof racks and side walls are covered in "Cori" ribbed carpeting with a

centre roof strip in striped moquette to match that of the seating. Interior window sills are wood capped. Floor covering is colour keyed rubber, whilst the test coach also had carpeting to steps, entrance and aisle. Normally thirty five Jonckheere Siesta reclining seats would be fitted, but an optional rear mounted floor level toilet cuts passenger capacity to 33. The test coach was fitted with the toilet, thus bringing the vehicle within the scope of this special issue.

Heat is provided through floor level ducting along the saloon side walls, whilst individual blowers and a single non glazed roof panel provide ventilation. An extractor is mounted in the rear of the roof. Individual reading lights are situated in the parcel racks above each seat, between which opaque panels cover the main dim and bright saloon lighting. The prototype was wired for a coffee machine and video equipment (not installed) and fitted with a Blaupunkt self seeking stereo radio/cassette player and p.a. system with both pedestal and wander microphones. A courier seat mounted to the left of the aisle was an optional extra fitted on the prototype, but Saran type side window blinds are fitted as standard.

The comfortable driver's area incorporates a fully adjustable Bremshey seat, tinted side windows, full width screen blind plus side blind, dash and overhead air vents, and separate heating controls. Individually controlled speakers are provided and an electric fan each for the driver and courier are included. Whilst the full width window blind gave excellent sun protection for the driver as it was not of the see-through variety it restricted passengers forward visibility when in use.

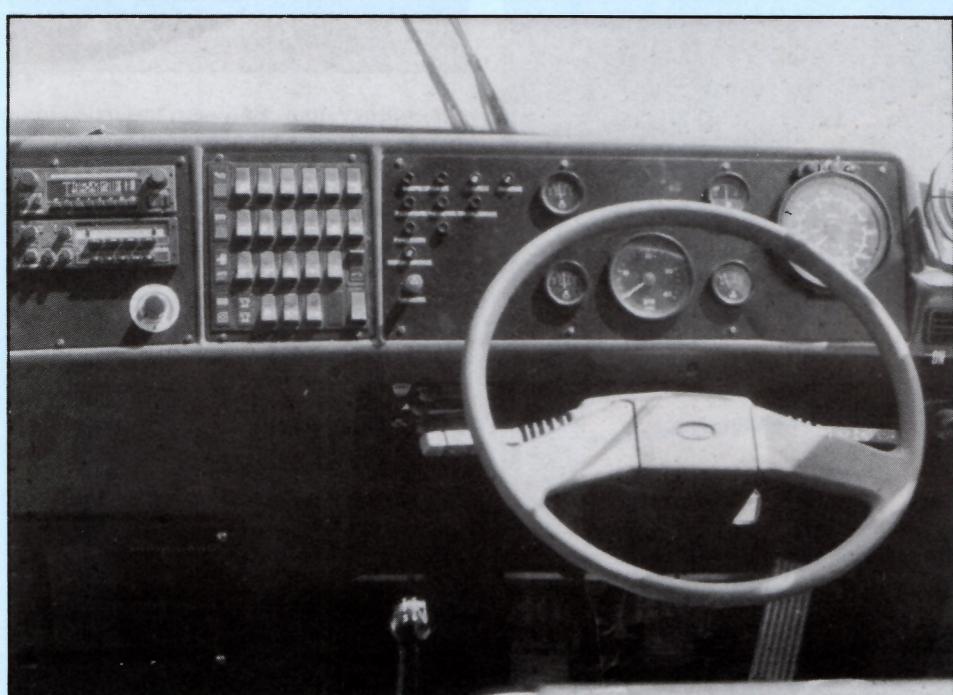
The dashboard directly in front of the driver features the usual Ford instrumentation plus a centrally mounted rev counter included because of the rear engine. To ensure all instruments are visible through and around the steering wheel the tachograph is set to the right and warning lights to the left. To the left of the instruments is the switch panel with all switches plainly marked by international symbols. The radio/cassette/public address unit is further to the left, more or less in line with the aisle, where it can be easily reached by either driver or courier. The handbrake valve lever is below the right hand side of the dashboard, and the gear lever is in the conventional position at the left of the seat. A five speed gearbox is fitted. I found there to be very little movement across the gate but gears easy to locate, though the selection mechanism was a little stiff. Quest have perfected a twin cable gearchange which works admirably with no undue sloppiness. No retarder is fitted but an exhaust brake is incorporated, operated by the right heel on a pedal alongside the seat instead of the more usual left foot button by the clutch pedal. The pedals themselves were comfortably positioned, but it was a little disconcerting at first to find the brake pedal set well below the height of the clutch, looking almost as though it was stuck in the depressed mode. When driving, however, I found its position, level with the accelerator, made it easier to move my right foot from one to the other.



Above left: Cab floor layout in the Piccolo.

Above right: The comfortable interior features Jonckheere "Siesta" reclining seats.

Below: Instrument layout on the Piccolo is excellent. Every control is clearly visible.



All controls and switches could be reached easily; the steering wheel was set at a nice height and rake, and visibility was good including rear vision through the two large convex exterior mirrors. Two passenger view mirrors, one each for driver and courier, were mounted inside the coach. Again convex, they gave a good view of the interior plus limited vision through the high rear window. Wipers, two speed and intermittent, cleaned well out to the sides of the screen, but parked vertically in the centre about one foot apart. Although they did not really obscure vision, I would have preferred wipers which parked horizontally at the bottom of the screen. Looking through Jonckheere photographs I note that all wipers park vertically, presumably to facilitate the fitting of split screens. These were standard on the Bermuda and are still available on Jubilee models by request.

The Piccolo was very similar to drive to many full-size coaches. The air suspension gives a fairly stable ride with no noticeable fore and aft pitching and what little body roll there was, was experienced only on tight corners. In addition to the Dunlop air springs, both axles have two blade quarter elliptical springs for positive location. Panhard rods are used for lateral axle location. The air system has self levelling valves for ride height and stability control. Ford integral power steering, recirculating ball type, is fitted. This I found comfortable, providing just enough assistance to take the hard work out of steering, yet leaving plenty of feel. The steering is very positive, and for a driver strange to the vehicle, there is a tendency at first to overcorrect. It does not take long to become accustomed to the handling characteristics of the coach, and the overall impression is of a stable vehicle which is pleasant to drive and handles well.

The P35 was road tested under full load conditions and gave acceptable performance, although I felt personally that Ford's 6-600-s 6 speed gearbox would have given just a touch more sparkle than the Turner T5A 5 speed which is fitted. At higher speeds the engine power handled the gear ratios reasonably well, but if a slope was encountered when pulling away acceleration was a little sluggish. Fortunately a rev counter is included in the instrumentation and by sensible use



Sizeable exterior mirrors are fitted together with twin interior rear view mirrors.

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of engine revs, optimum power can be utilised. Maximum torque is achieved at 1,700 rpm whilst maximum power is obtained at 2,400 rpm although the engine will rev up to 2,700. By staying between about 1,500 and 2,500 rpm, I found that the coach could cope with most road conditions fairly comfortably. 70 mph is achieved at 2,450 rpm in top, well within the engines capability, but the fairly high top gear does reduce flexibility at the low end. I found the torque adequate to hold around 35 mph in top gear, but to accelerate from this speed I found it better to change down a gear. On hills the coach did suffer a little, but provided downward gearchanges were anticipated and made before the engine revs dropped too low a reasonable speed could be maintained on most hills. At 2,600 rpm 4th gear gave approx 61 mph and 3rd gear around 36 mph.

Fuel checks were carried out using neck to neck tank filling before and after the run. A distance of 341 miles was covered after which 129.8 litres (28.55 gallons) of fuel were needed to refill the fuel tank. This gave a figure of 11.94 mpg overall for a journey which included hilly countryside, motorway and town routes.



Above: The test vehicle carried an attractive livery. The toilet is an optional extra.
Below: Offside showing emergency exit.



The coach was fully loaded and had been driven quite hard, so I would anticipate a higher figure than this on general touring work for which I feel the coach would be suited.

Generally I felt the Jonckheere P35 Piccolo to be a very nice medium size coach which could be used on practically any job and would be acceptable for prestigious group travel work. It is not a motorway racer, but a comfortable well equipped tourer. A slightly lower ratio back axle would help to give it slightly better performance at low engine revs, or possibly even a change of gearing in the Quest "U" drive, for which I understand different ratios are possible. Full details and price of the P35 are available from Roeselare Sales Ltd, North Portway Close, Round Spinney, Northampton NN3 4RQ. Telephone (0604) 45721. Telex 317182.

Ray Pearson

As a result of this evaluation, we can now offer the Ford 6 speed gearbox as an option.

Specifications

Length: 8.205m

Height: 3.35m

Width: 2.49m

Engine: Ford six cylinder turbo.

Capacity: 5.95 litres.

Maximum Power: 114 Kw (153 bhp) at 2,400 rpm.

Maximum Torque: 491 Nm (362 lb/ft) at 1,700 rpm.

Gearbox: Ford/Turner T5A 5 speed.

Suspension: Air with quarter elliptic leaf springs for axle location.

Steering: Ford integral power ratio 20.4 : 1.

Brakes: Air/hydraulic dual circuit.

Maximum speed in gears at 2,600 rpm

1st	10 mph
2nd	17 mph
3rd	36 mph
4th	61 mph
5th	70 plus mph

Speed in gears at constant 2,000 rpm

1st	8 mph
2nd	14 mph
3rd	28 mph
4th	46 mph
5th	58 mph

Body Features: Tinted side windows, laminated one piece screen, power operated door, full soft trim interior, central luggage bay, 35 Jonckheere Siesta reclining seats, courier seat, Blaupunkt Munchen "350" system, peage window, full body protection and insulation.

Options: Toilet compartment, double glazing, catering equipment, TV and Video equipment.